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GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY: REASSESSING POWER, HYBRIDISM AND PLURALITY

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Abstract

Globalization has been a disputed concept among social theorists who diverge in defining the time-line, the contents or even the consequences of global processes, whether they refer to transnational capitalism, to liberal democracy, to cultural encounters, mass-media, fashion or the internet. Traditionally, globalization has been either viewed as the spread of western modernity, as an eroding force against the nation-state or, perhaps more importantly, as an uneven and contradictory system of fluxes between centre and periphery, which is often associated with the historically-bounded dichotomy between the west and the rest. Rather than a reified substance, contemporary globalization is broadly the heuristic device which connects the global and the local supporting the continued relations between old colonizers and post-colonized societies. From imperialist days to nowadays, globalization brings into play a history of violence and domination, but also of resistance, change and creativity, a history of civilizational encounters but also of inner transformation and permanent recreation of modernities. The purpose of this paper is to rethink the nature of the global context and its significance for local experiences of culture, power and identity, departing from the timeless structure/agency problem. I argue that the historical construction of the post-colonial society and of the individual self are not separate processes nor suffer differently the impact of local and global forces; on the contrary, they establish a relation of complicity marked by openness, indeterminacy and ambiguity. Hence, I discuss three main problems in order to establish the relation between globalization, agency and the constitution of modernities.

First, I focus on power and domination emphasizing the ways through which globalization has historically produced inequalities at several levels: the power of the west over the other, the struggle of powers in post-colonial "colonization" (such as the

confrontation between socialist and liberal democrat visions of the state), the power of post-colonial elites over the people, the tensions in defining the boundaries of subaltern otherness. Remembering Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks,* where he stressed the transformation of subjection (colonial racism) into subjectivity, contemporary processes of hegemony/subalternization emerge from the entanglements between levels and bring in multiple references. Secondly, I draw on issues of hybridism and culture in colonial/postcolonial societies, exploring the connections between the visions of hybridization globalists (eg., Bhabha or Appadurai) and the constitution of multiple modernities, through the entanglements produced by processes of hybridity, according to Bhabha, the third space which enables other positions to emerge. Drawing on the example of Mozambique (where I developed fieldwork) some examples of how people are borrowing meanings from western dominators enables us to emphasize the creativity and hybridity of cultural constructions. Thirdly and lastly, I conclude through a discussion of the relationship between plurality – plural processes of globalization, multiple references for constituting and performing the self – and Eisenstadt's concept of multiple modernities.

Short Bio

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Introduction

As the title of the paper – globalization and identity – clearly indicates, the main purpose of this paper is to provisionally discuss a few theoretical and analytical problems, which were raised by my own experience in doing fieldwork in Mozambique, Southern Africa, and more specifically in the urban area of Maputo, Mozambique's capital. In a strong way, though my aim is to bring in the complex connections between contemporary processes of globalization and the constitution of identities in postcolonial settings, the road that led me to this subject was largely an 'inductive' one, which resulted, from its very beginning, from the confrontation with the life stories and discourses of the men and women living in nowadays Maputo.

In effect, contemporary Mozambique offered me an excellent setting for the development of a case-study analysis drawn from in-depth ethnographic work carried out in the urban area of the Mozambican capital, Maputo, during 2005, 2006 and 2010. The city of Maputo appeared as a rising melting-pot, clearly a hybrid space, where different individuals from different places and generations came to recreate their lives as well as their selves. My perspective here is, thus, one that wishes to place individuals in their historical and social contexts, rendering importance to the striking forms of differentiation that mark, through a number of processes, their positioning in a global, though highly unequal, world. That is to say, in a world marked by the legacies of European imperialism – in this case, Portuguese colonialism in Africa –, under the rule of which occurred the encounters between colonizers and colonized, and, at present, also by the rapid pace of globalization, whether economic, political, social or cultural. In short, my main purpose is to demonstrate how trajectories, practices and identities are flexible, highly agency related, and ultimately produced by multi-level entanglements, to use the term coined by Goran Therborn (2003) in his conceptualization of modernity. Indeed, in rethinking the nature of the global context and its significance for local experiences of culture, power and identity, it would be a misnomer to reproduce the old resilient dichotomy between structural processes and individual agency, a problem that in my view is still a marker in many of the debates around terms such as modernity or globalization, normally approached from a macro-

historical perspective, as against identity, belonging, hybridism or subalternity, often related to agency and individuality. Conversely, I argue that the historical construction of the postcolonial society and of the individual self are not separate processes nor suffer differently the impact of 'local' and 'global' forces. On the contrary, they establish a relation of complicity marked by openness, indeterminacy and ambiguity.

In my view, the particular history of societies or even individual agency are usually looked at through ways that betray wider visions of modernity as a whole. Classificatory schemes which make use of sociological embedded dualisms, such as the traditional/modern dichotomy, provide us with an excellent example. The resilience of these dichotomies stemming from Weber's, Durkheim's or Marx's concern with social change in the ninetieth century, and largely conceptualized by the Parsonian view of modernity as a process of convergence based on the universalization of a Eurocentric or Western model of institutional organization and cultural supremacy, made it difficult to escape the paradigm of modernization to which binary categorizations are referenced to. On the other hand, the opposite post-modernist view frequently sets off a difficult conciliation between globalized economic dynamics and local culture, a scenario where individuals end up by being either victims of transnational capitalism or heroic actors who protect cultural specificity from western domination. In fact, individual action, whether happening in Africa, Europe or the U.S., takes place in a world where social reality is multi-layered, entangled.

In Maputo, an industrial worker of a multi-national company or a street-vender of handicraft are, both of them, actors of global dynamics who permanently interpret the plural references that surround them. The first may compare himself to his non-Mozambican boss, receives training from 'foreigner' specialists and is well aware that the 'capitalist' opportunity he had allows him to earn more than his male relatives or mates. The second trades merchandise which is often produced in another country and sells it to western tourists with whom he interacts on a daily basis. At home, most probably, both of them watch with interest the Brazilian or Portuguese soap-operas which are increasingly popular in Mozambique and slowly incorporate those references into their system of values. At Sundays they may be attending to Zione or Pentecostal churches in which rituals or codes of conduct tend to mix custom with Christian religious values. These very brief examples are intended to draw attention to

the fact that most often people take part in transnational economic and cultural chains and are dealing with different, sometimes even contradictory, sources of information which they interpret and make use of in their daily lives. They live in a world where tradition and modernity, or perhaps in better terms, if we want to escape that old trap of social theorization, the "old days" and the "modern times", acquire multiple forms and meanings. Notwithstanding, a first conclusion that I am keen to stress is that modernity has, as Arjun Appadurai (1996) noted, a kind of 'smell' that crosses people's lives and discourses. It is not just a matter of institutional patterns or 'grand culture', the usual terms in which the issue of modernity has been normally discussed, but is rather a question of how things (undoubtedly and apparently smaller things) are appropriated and managed in daily life. The media culture and the consumerist urge it often conveys, as Featherstone (1990) notes, are not a minor subject of analysis. Beyond the debate around modernity and globalization, and the different and antagonist visions through which they are conceptualized, it is undeniable that 'modernity', to start with a simplistic definition, touches peoples' lives and recreates their imageries of the world. Once again, using Appadurai's terms, if modernity is today at large, it is so due to a process from which 'imagination' cannot be discarded.

Theoretically, from this perspective, globalization is necessarily a concept that ought to be discussed. Traditionally, globalization is either viewed as the spread of western modernity, as an eroding force against the nation-state or, perhaps more importantly, as an uneven and contradictory system of fluxes between centre and periphery, which is often associated with the historically-bounded dichotomy between the west and the rest. Rather than a reified substance, contemporary globalization is broadly the heuristic device which connects the global and the local supporting the continued relations between old colonizers and post-colonized societies. From imperialist days to nowadays, globalization brings into play a history of violence and domination, but also of resistance, change and creativity, a history of civilizational encounters but also of inner transformation and permanent recreation of modernities. Here, the purpose is to rethink the nature of the global context and its significance for local experiences of culture, power and identity.

Hence, I will very briefly discuss three main problems in order to establish the relation between globalization, agency and the constitution of modernities.

Firstly, I intend to address the problem of modernity and the ways in which modernization theories have been put under a critical trial, giving way to new forms of conceptualizing the relationship between plurality – plural processes of globalization, multiple references for constituting and performing the self – and the ideal of a global, though multiple and entangled, modernity. Secondly, I draw on issues of hybridism and culture in colonial/postcolonial societies, exploring the connections between the visions of hybridization globalists (e.g. Bhabha or Appadurai) and the constitution of multiple modernities, through the entanglements produced by processes of hybridity, according to Bhabha, the third space which enables other positions to emerge, to a great extent as an outcome of agency and reinterpretation. Finally, I briefly, but necessarily, focus on power and domination, emphasizing the ways through which globalization has historically produced inequalities at several levels: the power of the west over the other, the struggle of powers in postcolonial "colonization" (such as the confrontation between socialist and liberal democrat visions of the state), the power of postcolonial elites over the people, the tensions in defining the boundaries of subaltern otherness.

1. Rethinking modernity(ies): a starting point to an endless discussion

The first problem, perhaps the most crucial, regards, quite obviously, the critical discussion of 'classical' modernization theories that present Eurocentric modernity as a universal model for social organization worldwide. The fact is that until recently, social sciences have been majorly organized around the founding dichotomy between pre-modern and modern, aiming to portray and understand the shift from the first to the latter. Classical theories as framed earlier by Marx, Durkheim and Weber and developed to a peak in the 1950s, when Parsons started to speak of modernization as an unavoidable process, believed modernity would progress starting from the West to become more or less worldwide and universalistic. Economic growth, differentiation, rationalization, individualization, urbanization, secularization, and so on, were the central dynamics of the modernization process. Furthermore, if we look

at anthropology, it is quite clear that, as a discipline, it was defined, until near quite recently, by the very constitutive idea of a contrast between 'traditional', pre-modern tribes, societies, and cultures and the societies of modernity. Even in present days, the idea of modernization has not yet reached its death throes. Let us be reminded, for instance, of Giddens's definition of modernity. For the author (Giddens, 1990:1), as for many others, modernity refers to the 'modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence'. This implied, of course, that all the abovementioned processes would converge to change the world into a global homogenous bloc.

In fact, the term globalization became quite popular in discourses, from the 1980s onwards, due to its close connection with the rise of multinational corporations. In the 1990s many scholars approached the world as global, putting forward the idea of a 'new form of society' (Beck 1990), a 'global society' (Turner 1989). A simple way of interpreting globalization was, however, to see it still as the spread of western modernity across the world. Yet, at this time many have started to make a harsh critique of this view. For instance, Mike Featherstone, a theoretician of cultural studies, spoke against such a perspective, which sees globalization as generalized modernity. For him, rather than uniformity, globalization seems to make us aware of new levels of diversity. Indeed, a new stage for power struggles, whether aiming at recognition (Honneth) or redistribution (Fraser), in which differences are part of the game is more close to the real processes around the globe than the myth of homogenization ever was. As Raewyn Connell claims in her Southern Theory, globalization theories have to a great extent been built upon a number of dichotomies (Connell 2009, 56-58), such as global versus local, homogeneity versus difference, dispersed versus concentrated power, which have largely contributed to perpetuate the uneven relation between north and south, and furthermore, between northern theorization and southern perspectives.

The proper definition of modernity is at the core of the problem whenever one wants to built the analysis upon a perspective that does not betray the dualist foundations of social sciences. Every single effort to deconstruct a theory of modernity ends up by clashing with the lack of words to address the growing complexity of social

processes worldwide. I have no intention of embarking on the difficult endeavour of trying to define what constitutes the core of modernity. The answer to this question, as crucial it may be, is not by any means an easy task and goes far beyond the purpose of this paper. What I can say on this matter, and putting it perhaps it excessively simplistic terms, is that there has been a certain differentiation of perspectives, depending on the ways through which modernity is addressed and discussed, even if today no one would certainly argue against difference and plurality. In fact, transformation processes both in Western and non-Western contexts helped to rethink the conceptual discussion on modernity viewed as a universalistic model for social organization. Nonetheless, there are a few approaches, such as for instance that of Volker Smith (2010), who, to a certain extent, still defends a theory of institutional convergence, though the processes of institutional differentiation result in a few variants of modernity, depending on how institutions are shaped in particular societies. Contrasting to this emphasis on institutional differentiation, cultural approaches to modernization theories have perhaps been more fruitful in responding to the need for theoretical alternatives to the classical paradigm.

In effect, a number of scholars critical of Eurocentrism and Westernization have shown heterogeneous outcomes of modernity in different parts of the globe at the same time that the promises of the modern project were seen as falling into pieces at the very centre of modernity.

In the Western world, secularization theories, to provide a brief example, have been central to the discussion, as increased evidence suggests that the decline of religious beliefs is far from having a wide reach: the U.S. remain the central example of modernity without secularization, which counters the deep-rooted idea of secularization as a driving force of modernity. This simple example, among many others possible, may illustrate not only the difficulties in ascertaining the core of the modern project, but also the various meanings of the term modernity. As Bernard Yack proposes, the meaning of modernity is twofold. We may be referring to a historical epoch – and in this sense we all live in modern times – or, conversely, to specific processes and forms of organization that characterize modern societies, and contain therefore a particular substance (Wittrock: p. 31). In the second sense, as Bjorn Wittrock claims, we may speak of a variety of modernities, though the term modernity

may be indicating a sort of a common core that would be shared, more or less, by those societies enrolled in the historical process of modernity.

Post-colonialist scholars, and most of the critics of Eurocentric and westernized views of modernity, have argued in favour of plurality, either announcing the end of modernity and the consequent shift to a post-modern era, or alleging that, rather than expand in a homogeneous flow, modernity has evolved in multiple pathways. The latter implies the redefinition of modernity itself, leaving behind ideal conceptions of a congruent history and process, as earlier mentioned. As Bernard Yack (1997) quite radically argues, socio-economic and cultural practices do not fit coherently together, and viewing modernity as a coherent whole is a particular type of fetishism. In this train of thought, there is a fallacy in the definition of classical modernity. The truth is that there has never been homogeneity, not even in Europe. Indeed, the centre of the modern project – Europe – only hardly can be seen as homogenous, whether in economic or political terms. The institutional apparatus of modernity (a democratic nation-state, a liberal market-economy, a research oriented university, etc.) cannot be understood without considering culture and cultural change.

Alongside the critical views of western modernity and modernization theories originated in the West, in non-western settings new approaches of modernity are of the utmost importance. Colonial imperialism followed by the rapid development of globalization did not necessarily produce homogeneity, putting an end to local specificities. Societies may be transformed but in multiple pathways. In this sense, modernity can be understood as global and even sometimes 'westernized', but not necessarily as universal, unique or totalizing. For instance, individual rights and the quest for equality (central points of modernity's moral order) may have worldwide impact in the new politics of identity, but those effects do not erase, without leaving traces, local history, customs and cultural settings. Instead, they merge, generating different and what we may provisionally call, at the lack of a better term, 'new modernities'.

Theoretical approaches have thoroughly debated the constitution of these particular modernities. Post-modernist views stressed, for instance, the question of hybridism as essential to capture the fluidity of societies; this term, so well adaptable to research, was incorporated in postcolonial theorizations in order to grasp the

features of complexity in non-western postcolonial societies. Another interesting concept, perhaps even wider in its theoretical reach as it diminishes the gap between an ideal homogeneous West and a heterogeneous non-West[1], is the one of multiple modernities proposed by S. N. Eisenstadt and developed in a number of flourishing approaches. Eisenstadt contends that the best way to understand the history and impact of modernity in the contemporary world is to conceive it as a continuous movement of constitution and reconstitution of several cultural programmes, to which the occidental pathways are a central reference, due, among other reasons but not uniquely, to its historical precedence. In this sense, modernity and westernization are not synonyms. Instead, modernity should be defined as an ongoing process, open to permanent reinterpretation and reconfiguration, where agency plays a key role, whenever emergent processes of social plurality are portrayed (Kaya, 2004). In short, multiple, open or even alternative modernities (Appadurai, 1996; Gaonkar, 2001) are, therefore, powerful concepts for the examination of local diversity and global inter-relations.

The multiple modernities approach is indeed appealing and allows us to take a great step away from the convergence perspective that dominated western thought in the 1950s. But, even so, it poses a few conceptual difficulties that ought to be critically addressed. The analytical focus on the nation-state is, almost needless to say, one of them, as a number of authors have claimed. The erosion of the nation-state in favour of transnational forms of regulation, which are seen as an increasing force in current days, is, as we are well aware, a problem extensively scrutinized. However, another problem of equal or even greater relevance to my rationale in this paper is, conversely, related to the multiple modernities approach's dependence from a 'civilization' stance, which has led many to focus their attention on the cultural outcomes stemming from *axial age* civilizations, thereby narrowing the debate to the confrontation between the West and the Eastern Asian corners of the globe. In the present state of the debate, the positioning of Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, in this debate is still, comparatively, a marginal one. However, if we do want to advocate for such as

[1] Multiple modernities is in fact an interesting approach, as it focuses on the intra-European and intra-western world diversity of modernities, avoiding an unitarist view of the modern West in opposition to post-colonial societies. This approach permits one to surpass the opposition between totalizing and Eurocentric theories, on the one hand, and post-modernist views of the collapse of the project of modernity, on the other.

perspective, this body of macro-historical analysis has to be broaden to social realities other than those framed under the contours of axial civilizations' terms (see Olaniyan 2005). For colonialism and its historical consequences are well alive in African societies, perhaps those which suffered the most extensive and invasive forms of colonial domination (Connell 2009). In this line of reasoning, it is certainly a different matter to apply de multiple modernities paradigm to Japan, as in Eisendatd's famous study, or to southern Africa.

In fact, another important point is that multiple modernities, and let me for now keep the terminology, do not merely coexist: they interconnect within societies and between societies. This particularly powerful idea is suggested by Goran Therborn (2003), when speaking of modernities as entangled, that is to say, permanently interchangeable and reciprocally conditioned through multiple encounters in a global world. From this point of view, Therborn's idea of entangled modernities, to recall just a major example, constitutes a key concept for the rethinking of social change at a global level and is also a powerful tool for the micro-analysis of the hybrid outcomes of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial encounters. In fact, the historical centrality of European colonialism in the rise of contemporary modernity points directly to the cultural and institutional entaglements of global modernities in a post-colonial world. Moreover, several modernities may be tied up in post-colonial societies, such as Mozambique. Historically, the features associated with Western liberal modernity (e.g., capitalism, nation state, autonomous individuality) are important, but there are other modernities which took part in post-colonial developments (socialist modernity, for instance), starting with the building up of an independent nation. Human rights may have become the legitimate directive to guide political and institutional action (as U. Beck proposes, for instance), but custom has not ceased to be a powerful force. It is, therefore, this open character of modernity that allows for the plurality of identities in the contemporary world, as I. Kaya suggests. In this sense, the flow of modernity may also be considered in each experience rather than giving the whole attention to macro-socio-historical moments. Furthermore, the creativity of action, enhanced by post-colonialist scholars, is of great importance to the multiple modernities perspective.

The entanglements occurring in today's world cannot therefore be considered without bringing in the colonial history set by Europe's imperialist project. The

dialogue between the modernities' approach and postcolonial theory is thus of major importance. Undoubtedly, post-colonialism continued the best tradition of critical theory and had a crucial role in deconstructing modernization theories, which, in the 1950s, tried precisely to cope with the fall of colonial empires establishing patterns for universal development guided by the supremacy of western modernity.

2. What is plurality?

The idea of entaglements forming multiple outcomes convokes the notion of plurality, which is of great importance not only to critically conceptualize modernity from a macro-social perspective, but also to bring into play different levels of analysis, from macro to middle and micro range processes. Without further conceptualization, the mere assessment of plurality may lead us to a rather empty and bluntly obvious exercise.

My claim is, in this respect, that plurality (or multiplicity) must be conceptualized with the help of the notion of hybridism, which was so well developed by Homi Bhabha, among others. Drawing upon Bhabha's (1994) work on appropriation and mimicry as principles creating a third space which enables a variety of other positions to emerge, it is possible to think of the complex entanglements that lead people to recreate their own imageries of modernity and their identities in an unequal global world.

Developing his work under the influence of post-structuralism (and particularly taking on Derrida's notion of difference), one of Bhabha's central ideas, to put it very shortly, is that of 'hybridization' which, inspired by Edward Said's *Orientalism*, describes the spring out of new cultural forms, such as multiculturalism. Rather than viewing colonialism as a mere and diffuse inheritance of past days, Bhabha contends that the colonial legacy is still a powerful intruder in present culture. In a way, and remembering Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks,* where he stressed the transformation of subjection (colonial racism) into subjectivity, contemporary processes of hegemony/subalternization emerge from the entanglements between levels and bring in multiple references, one of which is still the colonial inheritance.

The history of Mozambique from colonial days to the present is quite illustrative. A good starting point, for reconstructing the recent past of the country, goes back to colonial days accounting for the transforming impact of the Portuguese colonial system which reached a peak during the 1940s and 1950s, the golden period of the *Estado Novo* (the Portuguese right-wing authoritarian regime). The colonialist action in Mozambique started its intensive phase in the late nineteenth century – it was only in 1910 that Mozambique gained the administrative status of Portuguese colony – and began to decline when the colonial war started in the 1960s. In June 1975, a year after the overthrow of the dictatorship in Portugal through a military coup, Mozambique became an independent nation, not without enormous political and social problems. So much so that even today, 15 years after the end of the civil war, Mozambique remains one of the poorest nations in the world.

The transition towards democracy that began in the mid-1980s was consolidated with the end of the armed conflict in 1992, as the culmination of a wide-ranging political dialogue. In fact, the pluralism recognized in the 1990 Constitution was intended to open up space for new ideas, through free elections which resulted in the current multi-party parliament. The new Constitution introduced several changes: it recognized the right to life (by abolishing the death penalty); the plurality of ideas (by adopting a multi-party system); the separation of powers (between the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary); and freedom of the press. In the politico-administrative field, decentralization has been the main option for forging participatory development, even though rural communities were the major forces excluded from the first phase. The opening of the market to free initiative is establishing the groundwork for the emergence of a national business class. In the cultural field, the acceptance of local African values, the recognition and valuing of mother tongues, of the bases of Mozambican identity, of traditional medicine, of community modes of life, are integral parts of reconciliation. However, these political and ideological aims set off new forms of tension and entanglement between “past” and “present”, between custom and law. Gender relations may, in this sense, provide us a good example to start with.

This situation of gender inequality is exacerbated by the fact that, under widely practised customary law, men have direct inheritance rights to farm land, cattle and

property – particularly housing – whereas women do not. Under customary law, women's access to all these resources depends on kinship or marriage: in other words, women acquire access to land and a house through their parents, brothers or husbands (e.g. Waterhouse 1997, Dominguez 1996, Junod 1962, Loforte 1996). Even though formal law establishes the legal equality of women and men, spouses are only fourth in line for inheritance[2] – which is a problem for women, when traditional property rights are vested in men. Divorce generally means that a woman loses all access to the resources of her husband's household and, traditionally, even access to her children. These widespread customs are opposite to efforts of establishing legal gender equality, thus, generating tensions between conflicting codes of conduct.

My argument recaptures precisely the concept of entanglement between different historical inheritances in order to reason that for a long time Mozambique stood at the crossroads of various influences: the action of the Portuguese colonial administration combined with the British far-reaching economical and social authority or the influence of Christian Protestant missions (the Suisse mission for instance) arriving from several countries (despite the fact that Portugal is a exclusively Catholic country[3]) provide examples favourable to my claim. In post-colonial Mozambique, from the phase of post-independence socialism to contemporary openness to transnational capitalism, the entanglements of modernity grew in direct connection with the speed of globalization, thereby producing hybrid outcomes, which reveal themselves through individual agency and reinterpretation, thus conveying a sort of complex mimicry.

Mimicry, as Homi Bhabha conceptualizes, is always an act of appropriation and, he adds, 'one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge' (Bhabha 1994: 86). Even if mimicry is not necessarily intentionally appropriative of the 'other', it normally refers to an action that takes a term or idea out of its former context and integrates it into one's own horizon, or narrative.[4] In short, mimicry involves a double articulation that implies a complex strategy for

[2] Article 2133 of the civil code.
[3] In 1950 Mozambique had 210,000 Catholics and 60,000 Protestants (census figures), despite the non-existence of any Protestant minority in Portugal. In 1957 there were 310 Catholic and 200 Protestant priests (or ministers).
[4] On cultural exchange and appropriation, see also Eisenstadt (1987).

handling change, but also regulation and discipline, through the appropriation of the other. In this sense, hybridization processes always imply agency. Unless agency is brought back in to the debate and the analysis of particular settings, the idea of culture as a substance that can be mixed would end in reification.

Hence, and repeating a former idea, the construction of the post-colonial society and of the individual self are not separate processes nor suffer differently the impact of local and global forces; on the contrary, they establish a relation of complicity marked by openness, indeterminacy, ambiguity, in sum, by what post-colonial theorists, such as Homi Bhabha, call liminality, a space of hybridism, where the frontiers of culture or historical time are flexible and changeable. In men's and women's life stories we find striking examples of such flexibility, such capacity for recreating plural identities through complex imaginaries of difference and belonging. On the one hand, the "lost world" of the pre-modern/pre-colonial *old days*, whose traditions are recalled as pure, uncontaminated, and where men and women had secure roles and identities, is recreated through the imprinted memories of colonial inheritances, which helped to produce the ever-lasting myth of the origins. At the same time, the contemporary blend between a plethora of social processes and images (e.g., the impact of the media and fashion, of international organizations defending human rights and egalitarian gender ideals, of religion or of transnational capitalism, etc.) offers a complex set of references for (re)organizing daily life, discourses and identities. The "old" and the "new", the global and the local, appear tied together in flexible and multiple ways. Aihwa Ong described similar processes as the capacity for constructing flexible citizenship. The recreation of tradition and the use of multiple references allows for flexible forms of identity which result both from individual and collective interpretations of transnational capitalism or cultural globalization. In this perspective, men's and women's life stories not only represent a vivid testimony of historical change, but also reveal the permanent constitution of hybrid meanings and social practices.

In sum, theoretically, I argue that both individual trajectories and social configurations – what roughly I could refer to as "local modernities" – are being fabricated by multiple socio-historical entanglements, which imply the intertwining of different logics (such as the global and the local, the economical and the cultural, etc.)

and of different time periods (past and present, pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial, etc.). Furthermore, they are constantly being reshaped by institutional, political, economic and cultural changes as well as through agency and reinterpretation. Men's and women's entangled trajectories mirror major processes of social change, revealing how history converges and is juxtaposed in individual stories. Simultaneously, these stories enable us to see the creative power of individual action resulting in hybrid meanings and practices. As Castoriadis has noted, cultural patterns are not reducible to individual action, but the capacity for actors to create new meanings must be emphasized. In effect, Western values coming from a global world tend to mix with 'local' references, thus creating new ones as Comaroff's analysis of South Africa had already highlighted. Furthermore, as Talal Asad argued in his 1993 book on the genealogies of Christianity and Islam, people are often borrowing meanings from western dominators, using and transforming them in flexible ways.

3. Globalization, power and the reconstitution of otherness

Finally, I cannot rest my case without addressing, though very briefly and perhaps a bit simplistically, the issues of power. I contented that critical thinking about modernity, or even modernities as the new emerging paradigms propose, it would be nothing but misleading if we discard the umbilical connection between the process (in my view, a better word than project) of modernity and colonialism. European imperialism, and here I am referring empirically to a particular case, has been a driving force of modernity. It has been a history of violence and subjection, even if simultaneously has promoted massive changes and recreation. There is no need to further develop this issue as history has so well proved it. At this point, more important than just remembering the past, it is turning our eyes into the present. And the present is global, whatever the interpretation one gives to the word. But the fact is that, even today, what we may see as processes of hybridization and flexible appropriation of a myriad of symbols associated with the Western world invite us to draw our attention to the ways in which social relations and forms of domination have become more plural, though still producing striking forms of subjection in both Western and postcolonial societies. The rise of multiculturalism as a result of

immigration processes that have led many to seek for a better life standing in western countries has recently nourished the debate around otherness and domination at the core of western societies. In a way, whether living in southern Africa, Europe or the United States, Mozambican men and women, to go back to my empirical body of research, never fully escape the stigma of *racialized* 'otherness' in the global equation that opposes the North to the South (Connell 2009), even if the complex imageries of the other, as a subaltern other, are changeable and diffuse in their contents.

A main point here rests in the definition of otherness. Normally used to mobilize our western theoretical and methodological tools to look at the non-West as other, we sometimes forget that the reverse equation is also a possibility, though often a possibility disregarded by social sciences, at least to some extent. Theoretically, this is a problem raised by the postcolonialist theorization. However, the 'duality' of otherness (even if we do not forget the unequal distribution of recourses and wealth that opposes the North to the South, which is quite important when we speak particularly of Africa) is most probably, in my view, a problem for the future. In a way, we need conceptualizations that enable us to see a wider plethora of otherness and subjection in social relations as an alternative to treating cultural exchange through the classical dualistic categories that persist, at least phantasmatically, within the social sciences. This is not to say that domination and subalternty are not reproduced by contemporary globalization, whether we speak of global capitalism or global culture. Instead, my claim is simply related to the complex struggles for redistribution and recognition that operate worldwide involving each day a larger number of actors appearing in the public sphere. From political and social rights to the fight for the possession of material goods, people want a place of their own in the world, and the definition of this place always implies alterity, even in micro-interactions. On this behalf, a pair of jeans, a symbol of the West, can be a good example. In the Mozambican context, the ownership of such a material good represents a position of dominance, among the lower classes from urban Maputo. A pair of jeans has become a source of social differentiation. Why is this so? To a great extent, the mimicry played through the exhibition of western symbols (by the way produced in China), allows for the individual to imagine himself or herself as a participant in a global chain of valued images and symbols. At this point, the pair of jeans has ceased to be just western as it

is integrated in the performativity of the self, as it is appropriated and given a new meaning in social relations. The otherness has also been transported from global to local settings. Of course, many other examples could be invoked if we wanted to take our discussion further. But this very simple example is, for now, enough to make a point.

Redistribution and recognition are problems that must integrate our agenda for a global discussion. In this respect, I must bring in the debate between Axel Honeth and Nancy Fraser (2003). As the latter author concludes, both terms are important, since every single case of subordination is bi-dimensional. It implies both things and identities. However, even if the perspectives of both authors can be complementary, Axel Honneth draws our attention to a very important process in nowadays societies. Every day we engage in what, when defining reification processes, Axel Honneth calls the 'forgetfulness of recognition'. As he writes: 'Unlike a category mistake, reification refers to something that is not simply epistemic, but a habit or form of behaviour' (Honneth 2008: 52–3). Systems of conviction, whether racism, machismo or any other form of fundamentalism, contribute to blocking, through simplification, what he believes to be the initial recognition of the other. That forgetfulness is perhaps, in conclusion, a major problem that still challenges the ways in which we look at today's global processes of social differentiation.

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